

VOTER INFORMATION PAMPHLET

Proposition #1 - County Option Sales and Use Tax for Highways and Public Transit



Special Election - November 3, 2015

COUNTY PROPOSITION #1

Question: AN OPINION QUESTION TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS SUCH AS ROADS, SIDEWALKS, TRAILS, MAINTENANCE, BUS AND RAIL SERVICE, AND SAFETY FEATURES

Shall Salt Lake County, Utah, be authorized to impose a quarter-of-one-percent (0.25% or the equivalent of 1 cent for every \$4 spent) sales and use tax for the specific purpose of transportation improvements such as roads, trails, sidewalks, maintenance, bus and rail service, and traffic and pedestrian safety features, with the revenues divided among the county, cities and towns, and the public transit provider within the County?

- ☐ FOR THE TAX
- ☐ AGAINST THE TAX

Argument for the tax:

We all want our children and grandchildren to enjoy a wonderful quality of life now and in the future. Utah’s cities and counties face a growing population, deteriorating roads, and local budgets that fail to keep up with mounting maintenance costs. The need is visible on our streets and sidewalks. Our transportation choices are limited by gaps in transit service and incomplete bike paths and trails. The result: longer commutes, more wear and tear on our cars, hampered economic prosperity, and a diminished quality of life.

With new funding through Proposition 1 (a sales tax for local transportation), local elected leaders can prepare for population growth, take better care of our roadways and sidewalks, and promote economic prosperity in our community.

Prop 1 will provide a substantial piece of the local transportation puzzle. For just one cent of every four dollars spent—excluding food purchases—we can maintain our local roads, keep our economy moving, improve our air quality, and reduce our traffic so that we spend more time with our families and less time in our cars.

The cost of doing nothing is far higher for the average Utah family than the local option sales tax. Prop 1 would cost the average person \$40 a year, but our current road disrepair costs the average driver over \$600 more a year in added fuel use, tire wear, and extra car maintenance. In addition, for every dollar we invest now in infrastructure, we save \$6 in repair and \$10 in reconstruction work. We know that roads cost more taxpayer dollars when they are not maintained. Things like slurry seals, chip seals and overlays, that help keep roads in good shape cost money, but are far less expensive than going without maintenance and having to rebuild a road years later. Choosing to maintain our roads today is the financially responsible and fiscally conservative approach for families.

Prop 1 is dedicated exclusively to *local* transportation. Prop 1 is not for the construction of major highways and rail lines, nor will it fund the overhead of large agencies. Prop 1 will fund things that are close to home – the transportation options you use and need the most. It will fill a nasty pothole on your local street, finish a sidewalk between your house and your children’s school, or add to bus service, trails, and bike paths so you have more transportation choices.

More than 110 cities and towns across Utah passed resolutions supporting Prop 1. The business community solidly supports the measure because business leaders know that investing in transportation today will save taxpayer dollars tomorrow. This is a historic moment to join our local government officials and the business community in support of Prop 1.

Voting YES will save Utah families money, protect the local businesses, improve our air quality, and preserve our quality of life.

Jenny Wilson, Salt Lake County, Council Member at Large
Representative Johnny Anderson, District 34
Mayor Tom Dolan, Sandy City
Lane Beattie, President and CEO Salt Lake Chamber
Ron Jibson, President and CEO of Questar Corp.

Rebuttal against the tax:

Proposition 1 proponents argue that raising our sales taxes would improve our daily lives. The best way for our lives to be improved is to keep the majority of the proceeds of our own labors, not to be taxed.

According to the Utah Taxpayers Association, we currently pay on average \$3304 a year in taxes in exchange for the services that we are told this tax increase will pay for; roads, local budgets and maintenance. Before we should even consider a tax increase, we must verify that our government has done a thorough audit and has cut back on all waste and unaccountable spending. Waste is intrinsic in any budget of this size and must be constantly checked and corrected.

The proponents of Proposition 1 make mention that the money will go towards bus service but fail to mention that 40% of this sales tax increase is slated to go to the Utah Transit Authority. The Utah Transit Authority has a history of fraud, waste and abuse with our tax dollars. From lavish trips and bonuses for top executives to \$10 million parking lots that are never built, the Utah Transit Authority has not earned the public trust and should not be given more funding.

Government doesn’t need more money—it needs to better prioritize where it spends the taxes we already pay. Please vote no on Proposition 1.

Evelyn Everton
Sandy Resident - State Director Americans for Prosperity - UT

Argument against the tax:

Say NO to Proposition 1

If approved, the combined state and local sales tax in Salt Lake County will increase from 6.85% to 7.1% -- a change that will increase taxes, on average, by \$50 per person or \$200 for an average family of four. This could mean the difference between a week or more worth of groceries for most families.

Utah families have had enough new taxes this year as it is. The local option sales tax would be the third tax increase Utah residents have faced this year. In March, the legislature voted to approve a 5-cent-per-gallon increase in the gas tax, which now means that Utah drivers will pay over 48-cents-per-gallon just in taxes every time they fill up the tank. The state legislature also raised homeowner’s property taxes in the valley an average of \$50 per home.

Considered separately, these tax increases may not sound like much, but for lower-income and middle-class families, every dollar counts and higher local sales taxes would only make their financial struggles worse.

Supporters say that the proposed tax increase is, in part, for road and infrastructure improvement. But 40% of the tax increase – almost \$20 million dollars worth -- will actually be diverted to help fund the Utah Transit Authority. The Utah Transit Authority already receives \$139.2 million in Salt Lake County alone.

UTA executives receive six figure salaries and tens of thousands of dollars in bonuses and perks. The agency’s CEO traveled out of state on agency-funded trips 42 times in 28 months, traveling internationally nearly as often as the President of the United States.

It’s about stewardship. If the UTA can afford to pay such high salaries and award such benefits, then they probably can also afford to better shepherd the resources taxpayers have given them.

The Utah Transit Authority doesn’t need another \$20 million in extra revenue. Instead, the agency should be looking toward reducing executive pay, cutting down on travel costs, and reducing inefficiencies wherever they find them.

Finally, this sales tax will fall hardest on those who have little or nothing left at the end of the month. According to the Utah Taxpayers Association, the average Utahn already pays \$720 in sales taxes every year, and \$3,304 in combined state and local taxes. The local option tax would add a few cents to most purchases, which quickly adds up.

If the sales tax increase is passed, Utahns would pay a quarter of a cent more for all purchases. In Salt Lake County, this increased sales tax would scrape \$50 million out of our checkbooks, according to the state’s own analysis.

Government doesn’t need more money—it needs to better prioritize where it spends the taxes we already pay. Please vote NO on Proposition 1.

Evelyn Everton
Sandy Resident - State Director Americans for Prosperity - UT

Rebuttal for the tax:

Salt Lake County is a trusted steward of public funds. Investment in our community is prioritized so that funds are used wisely and efficiently. This fiscally conservative approach has paid significant dividends to residents. Our economy is thriving and employment is strong.

But the population of Salt Lake County – and the State of Utah – is projected to double in the next few decades. The current mechanisms for meeting growing transportation needs are insufficient. We can’t let traffic keep building and air pollution worsen. We need to invest in transportation to keep people moving, keep the economy strong and strengthen our quality of life.

At the same time, we have to prudently take care of our current roads rather than let them fall into disrepair. When that happens, the cost to taxpayers of deferred maintenance is much higher: \$1 invested to preserve our roads saves residents \$10-\$25 in costly repair or replacement later.

For the transit portion of Proposition 1, UTA has committed to utilize the new funds to improve and enhance transit service, with complete accountability and clear reporting of how funds are spent. There will be more bus service, more places, more often. This is a significant benefit to Utah’s families who rely on affordable transportation choices.

Proposition 1 is funding for your local communities and nothing is more local than the condition of local roads, sidewalks and trails. We encourage you, the voter, to make an informed decision regarding Proposition 1.

Jenny Wilson, Salt Lake County, Council Member at Large
Representative Johnny Anderson, District 34
Mayor Tom Dolan, Sandy City
Lane Beattie, President and CEO Salt Lake Chamber
Ron Jibson, President and CEO of Questar Corp.

The arguments for or against a ballot proposition are the opinions of the authors.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

The Salt Lake County Council will conduct a public meeting to receive input from the public with respect to the imposition of the “County Option Sales and Use Tax For Highways and Public Transit.” The public meeting will be held at **6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 20, 2015** at the County Government Center, Room N1-110, 2001 South State Street, Salt Lake City, Utah. All members of the public are invited to attend and participate in the public meeting. Prior to the public meeting, members of the public may submit written comments to the attention of the County Council Clerk’s Office, 2001 South State Street, Room N2-700A, Salt Lake City, Utah 84114.